

# FreeThought

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED RATIONALIST MONTHLY

□

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH :

**The Bible  
account of the  
creation of Eve  
is a preposter-  
ous fable.**

—THOMAS HUXLEY

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THE FIRST REBELLION

Vol. VII No. 7 ★ ★ Annual Subscription Rs. 6 ★ ★ Single copy 60 paise

God is a myth; immortality an illusion; Religion, a gigantic fraud

# Letters

## FREETHOUGHT

Sir, Though I have been having a rationalist outlook from my childhood, still I yearn to know more about rationalism. I was much inspired by the visit of Dr. Kovoov over here. My thirst is being quenched by reading your (our) magazine "FREE-THOUGHT".

Kakinada—L. T. S. J. A. T. A. Babuji.

## THOU SHALT NOT KILL

Sir,  
Christian ethics are said to rest on the foundation of the 10 commandments which Moses brought down from the Mountains.

The most important of these commandments states "Thou shalt not kill".

Yet when Moses saw people worshipping the golden calf, he summoned the priestly tribe, the levites to him. In a rage, Moses ordered them to kill the worshippers. In obedience to his orders, the levites slaughtered people by thousands (Bible: Exodus—Chapter 32).

Moses laid down the foundation of monotheism. Yet he showed an utter disregard for the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill'. If these are the actions of its founder, how can we regard christianity as being the repository of ethical values?

Tiruvalla

Daniel Manesse,

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## coming issues

August, 1977	'Sankaracharya' Special Number
September, 1977	'Anti-Caste' Special Number
October, 1977	'Bataji' Special Number

Contributors may please ensure that the Articles, Jokes and Anecdotes and other matter reach us by the end of the preceding month IN DUPLICATE DULY TYPEWRITTEN in double space on one side only.

Agency Application will be considered at places where there are no agents at present.—Ed.

# Free thought

Vol. 71

July 1977

[No. 7

## Editorial

### I. R. A. AND POLITICS

Adverting to our May editorial, there have been queries whether we are for or against any particular party. There may not be intelligent human beings, much less rationalists, who can be apolitical. We are bound to be more or less sympathetic toward or in tune with a political party. But that, we stress, is in our individual capacity.

As a group, we continue to refrain from being associated with any particular party. This is because of our keenness to serve as a forum for even rationalists who are not free (in this so-called democratic set up) to profess their political convictions. To this category belong the government and quasi-government servants (including defence personnel) whose number is bound to swell in a socialist set-up.

However, let us hasten to add that we are staunch advocates of the immutable principles, viz., secularism, socialism and democracy. We do not indulge in hypocritical explanations of these terms. For example, our secularism is one in which government and everyone of its representatives would KEEP AWAY FROM ALL RELIGIONS in public. Exploiting the religious under-current in the masses and thus perpetuating it has been the game of most politicians all along. Such persons would describe 'secularism' as a way of encouraging and hobnobbing with all religions EQUALLY. We are against any political patronage to any religion.

To cite an instance, it is sickening that the Tamil Nadu Governor should have been the chief guest at the 28th annual 'suprabhatam' prize distribu-



tion function on 12th June 1977. More vehemently we condemn his advocacy of RELIGIOUS education and his call for a SPIRITUAL atmosphere. There appears to be a deterioration of late. 'Heroes' like Sai Baba and Chinmayananda, get live coverage on Madras T. V.; upper caste domination is more apparent; religion seems to guide, if not determine politics; mythical characters are used more often to exhort people and transcendental (!) meditation (on what?) is to be introduced in educational institutions along with yogasanas (without examining these scientifically). Is secularism being pushed into the background?

We believe in a socialism in which there are no poor people nor will there be rich men enjoying luxury and permanent leisure. This stage of socialism is related to our concept of democracy where the term 'masses' will be irrelevant and intelligent educated human beings will, for ever, play their rightful role. Religion would have withered away along with poverty and ignorance.

This, in short, is our utopia in which work instead of being a means of livelihood will be the source of happiness and ego satisfaction.



## CHRISTIANITY AND INDIA

To divert the people's attention and dilute our attack, Hindu religious leaders accuse us of being too preoccupied with Hinduism. This accusation is not true as fellow-rationalists in Europe and North America have been exposing the hollowness of the claims of Christianity for a much longer period and in more concerted manner. This being a country with more than 80% Hindu population we are justified in concentrating on Hinduism with its myriad Babas, Swamijis and Acharyas.

Though those professing Christianity constitute about 3% of our popu-

lation, we classify them as one of the most obscurantist. The advent and spread of Christianity in India are associated with the domination of the whites over us. Many of the ills like official patronage to religion, job preference and playing Hindus and Muslims against each other (to the detriment of secularism) could be traced to this early mixing up of religion with politics.

The lasting damage done was creating a halo around mission-run convents. These 'educational' institutions have churned out many a slavish mind. They are over-zealous



about maintaining their 'independence' as institutions belonging to minority community. The foreign sources of their funds and the so-called social service they indulge in smack of ulterior political and religious motives.

It is worth remembering that Christianity is fighting a last ditch battle against scientific humanism. Thanks to the money-power of the Catholic Church, they maintain a

strangle hold on Latin peoples in Europe and South America apart from Asians and Africans. They have stooped down to gimmicks like 'miracle cure' by their versions of Sai Baba. It is their wealth and surreptitious proselytisation amongst the down-trodden in India, using every conceivable means, including bribery—that makes them potentially most dangerous. Let us beware!



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## KNOW YOUR BIBLE I

The real difficulty about the Bible is that though very few read it, everybody imagines that he knows what is in it.

To those who have read the Bible it is not a book, but a literature written by a succession of authors, differing in their religious beliefs, worshipping different Gods, representing different phases of civilization, writing hopelessly irreconcilable biographies of the same persons and histories of the same events, furiously denouncing one another's rituals as abominable in the sight of God and contradicting one another's views on his nature, and occasionally passing suddenly from Christian sentiments to outbursts of vindictiveness so atrocious that popular clergymen in London refuse to read them or allow them to be read in their churches, and bishops are appealed to by the most earnest of their flocks to have them struck out of the prayer book.

The nation's morals are like its teeth: the more decayed they are, the more it hurts to touch them.

—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

# WHY I GAVE UP CHRISTIANITY?

J. C. B. ABRAHAM

(Prof. J. C. B. Abraham is the Professor of Zoology of American College, Madurai of Tamilnadu. In 1972 he met the Hon. Mr. H. V. Bahuguna, the then Minister of State for Communications and persuaded Government of India to honour Bertrand Russell for his contribution to the spread of Rationalism and world peace by issuing a special postage stamp to commemorate Russell's birth centenary—a victory which he won for Indian Rationalists).

I was born and raised in a Protestant Christian family and since my parents were liberal in their attitude I did not have to rebel against any stifling home atmosphere.

My earliest doubts about Christianity were roused by its sweeping and exclusive claims. Salvation only through Christ and the reward of Heaven only for Christians

sounded very parochial. Since my best boyhood-friends were either Hindus or Muslims, a Heaven that could not accommodate them did not hold much attraction for me.

Later in College, I was fortunate enough to be thrown into a small group of young men interested in the philosophical implications of religion. Day long discussions with them eventually helped to crystallize my views about the religion of my ancestors.

## SHAW'S ICONOCLASM

My father, who had literary leanings, had introduced me to the plays of Bernard Shaw even while I was a schoolboy. Re-reading some of the plays I stumbled on the preface of 'Androcles and the lion'. I found in it one of the most scathing attacks on Christianity, particularly the organised, salvationist variety. As a result Christianity assumed for me all the despicable attributes of Spenthe, one of the characters in the play representing a typical Christian. Bernard Shaw's vertiginous iconoclasm thrilled me and I enthusiastically followed in his wake.

## RUSSELL'S LOGIC

While Bernard Shaw gave me the major initial impetus to give up any belief in Christianity, the more permanent influence in my life, as in the case of most of others has been Bertrand Russell. Two of his essays, "A Free Man's Worship" and "Why I am not a Christian" had a profound influence on me. The simple, lucid arguments beautifully developed in logical sequence with brilliant flashes of wit and wisdom completely convinced me. I decided, with an enormous

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## ECLIPSES

About the solar or lunar eclipse, the Hindu belief is that Rahu and Ketu gobble up the sun or the moon, which as we know is a figment of imagination. The warning not to look at the solar eclipse with the naked eye is, however, genuine. Actually, we should never look at the sun, since the intense heat of the Sun's rays on our retina will burn it. We may never again be able to see things directly in front by focussing our eye. The special caution during an eclipse is because, out of a desire to see the eclipse, one may suppress the natural tendency of the eyelids and the eyebrows to close down and look away. It is quite alright to look at a lunar eclipse. The rest of it, like taking bath or pregnant women not going out is nothing but crap.

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sense of relief, that I was not a Christian anymore.

## BIOLOGY

The Study of Biology, the subject of my professional interest, further reinforced my attitude to religion. All our bodily activities I found, could be explained in strictly materialistic, mechanistic, physiological principles. Even our most exalted thoughts and emotions could be shown to have a neural or an endocrine basis. One did not have to postulate a Cartesian ghost in the machine. As our bodies simply perished and disinteg-

rated after death, the concept of a soul or a spirit, the question of survival after death, or immortality became irrelevant. The whole idea of KARMA and the progression of the soul through a succession of incarnations seemed absurd. Since death would put an end to me and since I had to look forward to nothing after death, I found no need to fear or placate an imaginary God.

E. S. P.

From time to time, cases are reported of telepathy extra-sensory-perception and other such putative paranormal phenomena. Though they may seem mysterious at the moment, I do not think they are beyond the pale of the natural world. If they are genuine phenomena of our physical world there must be some quite normal causes behind them which will be duly discovered. It is common knowledge that our brain tissues emit electromagnetic waves. Even while we sleep there is a steady emission of these impulses resulting in the alpha rhythm. May not an amplified system of these electro-magnetic waves be the source of telepathic communications? In which case, is not EXTRA—Sensory—Perception really a refined form of sensory perception? What we today, in our ignorance, call extra-sensory-perception may be a perfectly normal function of the human brain. The history of science abounds with instances of new knowledge dispelling the aura of mystery surrounding erstwhile ignorance. Was not hysteria considered, till the other day, as possession by the Devil? Similar examples can be multiplied indefinitely.

## SENSE OF RELIEF

Thus the study of Biology, added to the intellectual frame-work provided by thinkers



like Bernard Shaw and Bertrand Russell, helped me formulate my weltanschauung, my world-view, in which the beliefs of my ancestors had no place. I found that I had no use for the crutches of religion in my sojourn through life.

I mentioned earlier the enormous sense of relief that came with the abandoning of my ancestral religion. This must not be misconstrued as a merely negative result. There is a positive aspect to my shedding of religion.

prayers at the proper times and religious observances like church-going and Bible-reading could absolve me of my sins, now I felt a new sense of responsibility. Any harm I did to others or any fault I committed was irrevocable. I, therefore, was fully responsible for all my actions and had to watch very carefully every step I took. This transformation gave me an entirely new setup at values. I truly became a person, in the existential sense of the word. Charles Bradlaugh spoke of Man's gain from unbelief. To me, personally, it has been immense.

#### CONFESSION DOES HARM

Whereas formerly I felt that appropriate



### DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CATHOLICS & PROTESTANTS

Two neighbour children, a boy of five and a girl of six, got together in their bathing suits and went swimming in a nearby pond. Finally they decided that they could have more fun swimming in the nude. So out on the ground they went and took off their bathing suits. Then the little boy walked around the little girl observing her very closely. Then he said: "Gee! I didn't know there was that much of difference between Catholics and Protestants!"

### BISHOP ON LIPSTICK

A bishop had been speaking with some feeling about the use of cosmetics by girls. "The more experience I have of lipstick", he declared warmly, "the more distasteful I find it."

# MISSIONARY TURNED ATHEIST

CHARLES MAJOR

Why did I quit as a missionary and become an atheist?

I was born in South Africa where I was trained as a school teacher.

I grew up in the Anglican Church faith and later became a Moravian, a Baptist, a Methodist, and a member of the Divine Life, an eastern church started in India.

As a young teacher in South Africa I then believed in the Bible and its teaching without questioning it. I became a missionary and joined the Scandinavian Alliance Mission in Swaziland. This was of an American Evangelical origin.

I soon realized that the missionaries were people like myself and not semi-gods. There was eternal bickering over money received from the States when it had to be shared equally

## BRAHMACHARY'S BACHELORHOOD

New Delhi Metropolitan Magistrate has admitted a criminal complaint by Mr. V. N. Ahuja against Dhirendra Brahmachary, Director of the Central Research Institute for Yoga Vishwayatan Yogashram alleging enticing of a married woman and adultery. Mr. Ahuja's wife has been cited as the third accused.

His tenant who had been working with Dhirendra Brahmachary had developed intimacy with his wife. She had been seduced by Brahmachary and the tenant.

Dhirendra Brahmachary had a small executive plane of American make gifted to him and allowed to be imported duty free. He was planning an air taxi service.

His disciples included Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, Jaiprakash Narayan and Indira Gandhi.

by the missionaries. One woman received a large sum from the U. S. and was furious about having to share it with the others who had collected little. This continuous bickering upset me.

I was paid a salary as a teacher but took no money as a missionary. The minister where I lived was subsidized by the Transvaal Education Department. He appointed him-

self Principal although he had no teaching qualifications. He took the major portion of the salary, never doing any teaching himself. Three women and I taught the pupils. The women missionaries received more salary than I although they had no teacher qualifications.

At first they were kind and friendly but when they found that I collected bags of clothing which I gave to the poor free they became unfriendly. They got supplies of clothing from the United States but sold it. So my giving the clothing to the natives free upset their business.

I started reading the Bible seriously and it took me two years to go through it. After reading it thoroughly twice and reading the New Testament several times, I came to realize that it was all just rubbish.

It gradually dawned on me that there was such a diversity of opinions and contradictions and that the teachings were in many cases against a good moral code, that I lost confidence in Christianity. This caused me to make a study of anthropology, mythology, ancient history, psychology, etc. to gain a comprehensive knowledge of religion and philosophy.

I made these studies in 1940 and since have read much more on the subjects and am now a confirmed atheist.

Having first been a religious believer and a missionary and then a student of non-religious subjects, I soon saw that the Bible was a bunch of rubbish and that there is no

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## FUND RAISING HIT

A church was raising funds for a new church. The minister was calling on members for subscriptions. One of the pillars of the church rose and said, "I subscribe five dollars." Just at that moment a piece of plaster fell on his head. Half stunned, he said, "500 dollars."

Then the preacher said, "OH LORD, HIT HIM AGAIN."

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## TURNING A NEW LEAF!

The minister met Tom, the village never-do-well, and, much to the latter's surprise, shook him heartily by the hand.

"I'm so glad you have turned over a new leaf, Thomas," said the good man. "I was delighted to see you at the prayer-meeting last night."

"Oh, said Tom after a moment of doubt, "so that's where I was."

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God and nothing supernatural; and I am now proud to have become enlightened and I wish to support the Atheist program.

Courtesy: PROGRESSIVE WORLD,  
U. S. A.

FREETHOUGHT



# ILLUSTRIOUS BIBLICAL PERSONALITIES

JOHN E. REMSBURG

The author was famous American  
Educator—Ed.

Paine, Washington, Jefferson, Adams, Franklin, Madison, Hamilton, Jackson, Lincoln, Grant. How light would be the volume of American history if it did not contain the names and deeds of these illustrious men, how frail the temple of American liberty without these ten grand pillars. They are the landmarks that mark the successive stages in the founding and development of our great republic—the great and central figures around which clusters the most that is grand and glorious in our country's history—the bright stars that glitter

in the broad field of our political firmament. And yet, not one of these great names appeared upon the roll of Christian church.

## WHO WAS JEHOVAH?

A being of terrific character, cruel, vindictive, capricious and unjust—Jefferson

## WHO WAS ABRAHAM?

An insane barbarian patriarch who married his sister, denied his wife, and seduced her handmaid, who drove one child into the desert to starve and made preparations to butcher the other.

## WHO WAS JACOB?

Another patriarch, who won: God's love by deceiving his father, cheating his uncle, robbing his brother, practising bigamy with two of his cousins and committing fornication with two of his housemaids.

## WHO WAS MOSES?

A model of meekness, a man who boasted of his own humility, a man who murdered an Egyptian and hid his body in the sand, a man who exterminated whole nations to secure the spoils of war, a man who butchered in cold blood thousands of captive widows, a man who tore dimpled babes from the breasts of dying mothers and put them to cruel death, a man who made orphans of thirty-two thousand innocent girls, and turned sixteen thousand of them over to the brutal lusts of a savage soldiery.

## WHO WAS DAVID?

"A man after God's own heart". A vulgar braggadocio, using language to a woman the mere quoting of which would send

me to prison, a traitor, desiring to lead an enemy's troops against his own countrymen; a thief and robber, plundering and devastating the country on every side; a liar, uttering wholesale falsehoods to screen himself from justice, a red-handed butcher, torturing and slaughtering thousands of men, women, and children, making them pass through burning brick-kilns, carving them up with saws and axes, and tearing them into pieces under harrow of iron, a polygamist, with a harem of wives and concubines, a drunken debauchee, dancing half-naked before the maids of his household, a lecherous old libertine, abducting and ravishing the wife of a faithful soldier; a murderer, having his faithful soldier put to death after desolating his home, a hoary-headed fiend foaming with vengeance on his dying bed, demanding with his latest breath the deaths of two aged men, one of whom had most contributed to make his kingdom what it was, the other a man to whom he had promised protection.

### WHO WAS PAUL?

A religious fanatic; a Jew and a Christian. As a Jew, in the name of Jehovah, he persecuted Christians; as a Christian, in the name of Christ, he persecuted Jews, and both as a Jew and a Christian and in the name of both Jehovah and Christ, he practised dissimulation and hallowed falsehood.

### WHO WAS CHRIST?

He is called the "divine teacher", Yes.

He led the crowd,

He taught them justice, truth and peace

In semblance; but he lit within their  
souls  
The quenchless flames of zeal, and blessed  
the sword  
He brought on earth to satiate with the  
blood  
Of truth and freedom his malignant soul."

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### REST HOUSE

"Did you hear Robinson  
snoring in church this morning?  
It was simply awful".

"Yes, I did, he snored so  
loudly that he woke me up".

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### PRACTICAL ADVICE

An older pastor told a new  
preacher,

"If you ever forget the  
marriage ceremony, start quoting  
the scripture until you remember  
it".

Sure enough, he forgot, and  
the only Scripture he could  
remember was "Father, forgive  
them for they know not what they  
do".

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### TO MY GENERATION

Light the candle of thought  
In the dungeon of life!  
Let reason be shining  
In the horizon of thought!  
Wake up from the abyss of murk  
And open your eyes to see  
Wipe the blemishes out—  
And see the core of truth!

—U. Sarath Kumar.

# Praise be to the Bible!

As for the book called the Bible, it is blasphemy to call it the work of God.

—THOMAS PAINE.

To my mind scripture only means a writing and Bible means a book.

—WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THAKERAY, English Novelist.

If a man would follow, today, the teachings of the Old Testament, he would be a criminal. If he would follow strictly the teachings of the New, he would be insane.

—ROBERT INGERSOLL, American Writer and Lecturer.

The Bible has been throughout the ages the flaming sword that has barred woman's path to liberty.

—JOSEPHINE K. HENRY.

Living will teach you to live better than preacher or Bible.

—JOHANN W. GOETHE, German Philosopher & Poet.

The Bible has no place in the school room because it states as facts the grossest absurdities.

—FRANKLIN STEINER.

The inerrancy and the infallibility of the Bible are no longer possible of belief among reasoning men.

—S. PARKES CADMEN, American Reformed Clergyman.

Bibles have killed more Indians than have bullets.

—EARNEST A. HOOTON, American Anthropologist.



I say they (bibles and religions) have all grown out of you and may grow out of you still;

It is not they who give the life—it is you who give the life.

—T. C. WHITMAN, American Poet

It has, then, been conclusively proved many times that the Bible is not only replete with self-contradictions, absurd notions and childish errors, but is in no way entitled to the extravagant praise bestowed upon it—for good practical reason, no doubt—by many liberal and Rationalist writers; much less could it be regarded by any wholly sane Bible scholar as “the word of God”.

—MARIAM ALLEN DE FORD, American Author and Poet.

The Bible sanctions slavery. So much the worse for the Bible.

—THEODORE PARKER, American Theologian and Writer.

What the churches teach and the preachers preach is either false or fallacious. The Christians have scattered tens of thousands of so-called truths, injunctions, principles in sermons, leaflets, hymns, every one false, corrupting, enervating, emasculating, unreal, and injurious. All of them are out of the Bible, the most ruinous book ever written. Nothing ever furnished the same pabulum to impostors, sophists, scoundrels and tyrants.

—EDWIN P. REESE.

Christianity does not convert the Hindus, because our Bible miracles are not so large as theirs.

MARK TWAIN.

Advancing from the decayed premise of a divinely revealed religion contained between the covers of the Bible, the sole aim and function of established religion has been to adjust mankind to a hypothetical supernatural world, and save man from an imaginary hell.

—IRVING M. LEVY, American Rabbi.

# A CRITICAL LOOK AT CHRISTIANITY

PETER SAM

The life of Christ and his teachings are contained in the New Testament of the Bible, whereas the Old Testament deals with the story of man from Adam and Eve to Joseph and Mary. I think the word Christianity does not find a place in the whole of the Bible. It was after the death of Christ, the Christian religion was organised as a dogmatic and regimented institution around the church. For rational understanding of Christianity, a reading of Bertrand Russell's book 'Why I am not a Christian' will be more helpful than any other book on the Christian religion. He said that for a

person to call himself as a Christian, he must believe in God, immortality and Christ. He professed that he was not a Christian because he did not believe in God and immortality and to him Christ was not the best and wisest of men though he had a high degree of moral goodness.

## WORD WAS GOD

Now look at the definition of God in the Bible. "In the beginning was the 'word', and the word was with God, and the word was God." So God is equated with word. You know what a word is. You see actually a table made of wood with four legs, etc. The word 'Table' is only a symbol which describes the real table. God is equated to something unreal, a 'word'. Don't you see the absurdity of this. Does the above passage stand to rational thinking? Could it be explained? Could it be scrutinised? Therefore the pedantic theologians and the religious philosophers say that the ways of God are inexplicable and unscrutable.

## CAN HEART LOVE

The most dangerous part of Christian philosophy could be found in the following words.

1. "God has given you a very noble heart, that he created it to love him only and that it might be dissolved to him."
2. "You must have a high regard for your soul, because it is the temple where God resides". (Martial Lekeu—"Short Cut to Divine Love")

Does Martial mean the heart of man, that marvellous organ built of involuntary muscle fibres of a Special Kind, endlessly

circulating blood throughout our body till we die? Has it got the quality of love? I think it has absolutely no time to Love, it will stop beating if it begins to Love. Does the heart get dissolved with God? I think it is burnt to ashes along with the deadbody when cremated or perishes with the earth when buried.

### WHERE IS SOUL

Look at the soul, the temple where God resides as pointed out by Mr. Martial. Can you locate the soul anywhere in your body? Have you read the soul in Gray's Book of Anatomy or in Professor Cunningham's Book, which give beautiful and meticulous description of the structure of the various organs of the human body. Perhaps you may say that the soul is in the brain. The anatomical structure of the human brain does not reveal any soul in it, nor does the frontal lobe of the cerebral cortex of the brain where the highest functions of thinking, memory etc. take place show any signs of a soul in it. I believe that it is the soul or the Atman that has destroyed our personality by creating neurotic fear.

### RELIGION AND FEAR

Religion is based on fear. Bertrand Russell says:

"Fear is the basis of the whole thing—fear of the mysterious, fear of defeat, fear of death. Fear is the parent of Cruelty, and therefore it is no wonder if cruelty and religion have gone hand in hand".

Fear has myriad forms. Sigmund Freud gives the best illustration of the difference between normal and neurotic fear. A person in an African Jungle may quite properly be

afraid of snakes. That is normal and self-protective. But if a friend of ours suddenly begins to fear that snakes are under the carpet of his city apartment, then the fear is neurotic. All psychological fear may be characterised as neurotic. We have fear of God. The proverb is "That fear of God is the Beginning of Wisdom". It is high time to change it. Fear of God is the beginning of lunacy. There is fear of death, fear of diseases, fear of war, political fear, social fear, economic fear and a number of other types of various fear. Fear causes tremendous waste of energy. If you can observe fear you may see a chill at the pit of your stomach. Your heart begins to throb violently. Your blood pressure is increased. The blood becomes hot etc. These are symptoms which you experience when you engage in strenuous physical work, like a running race, lifting weights, etc. But the mere thought of fear could produce all these effects. How dangerous it is? So unless we destroy this element of psychological fear from the body of our personality, we cannot be healthy and rational in our approach to life.

### FREEDOM AND RELIGION

Religion has therefore stood in the way of man's free thinking. The net result of all the centuries of Christianity has been to make men more egotistic, and more self centred. The natural instincts of man for sex, parenthood, and herd instinct have been destroyed by the rigorous precepts of religion. Man is born free. He is born with a free mind—the thinking and creative mind. Civilisation is the reflection of this mind. The mind of



man by its very biological nature possesses inexorable freedom of thinking. No power, on earth can destroy its innate quality. History reveals the ultimate triumph of human mind. It is this power of mind that drives man to fight for his liberty when it is in danger.

### ORIENTAL DESPOTISM

I shall therefore close this discussion with

the words of Bertrand Russell:

"We want to stand upon our own feet and look fair and square at the world—its good facts, its bad facts, its beauties, and its ugliness; see the world as it is, and be not afraid of it. Conquer the world by intelligence, and not merely by being slavishly subdued by the terror that comes from it. The whole conception of God is a conception derived from the ancient Oriental despotisms".



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### ADAM AND EVE

"Darwin's assertion that man has sprung from the apes has stood the test of more than half a century of critical examination. Increasing knowledge and careful inquiry have but confirmed its truth. As a result, the stories of the creation of Adam and Eve, of their primal innocence and of their fall, have become for us, folklore. But by the men who built up Catholic theology they were accepted as solid fact. Man's special creation was one of the primary assumptions of the Catholic system. In it the Fall explained the origin of sin; and a horrible theory of the propagation of sin, relaxed on the basis of the fall of Augustine was accepted by official Catholic theologians. Darwin's triumph has destroyed the whole relevant theological scheme."

—Bishop Barns (Sermon in Westminster Abbey 9-25-27)

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### IS THE BIBLE A SAFE MORAL GUIDE?

#### POLYGAMY

The Patriarchs of the old Testament were polygamists. The New Testament nowhere prohibits a plurality of wives. Notwithstanding, polygamy flourished in Palestine. Monogamy came from pagan Rome, not Jerusalem.

Martin Luther approved polygamy and advised Henry VIII to adopt it; but by divorcing two wives and murdering two more, the founder of the Episcopal church avoided embarrassment.

# RELIGIOUS PERSECUTIONS

"Whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and tortuous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness, with which more than half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon, than the word of God."—THOMAS PAINE.

## COL. INGERSOLL

"I used to read in books", says Colonel Ingersoll, "how our fathers persecuted mankind. But I never appreciated it. I read it, but it did not burn itself into my soul. I did not really appreciate the infamies that have been committed in the name of religion until I saw the iron arguments that Christians used. I saw the 'thumbscrew'—two little pieces of iron, armed on the inner surfaces with protuberances to prevent their slipping, through each end a screw uniting the two pieces. And when some man denied the efficacy of baptism, or may be said, 'I do not believe that a fish ever swallowed a man to keep him from drowning'; then they put his thumb between these pieces of iron, and in the name of universal love and forgiveness began to screw these pieces together. When

this was done most men said, 'I will recant' ". The man who would not recant was not forgiven. They screwed the thumbscrews down to the last pang, and then threw their victim into some dungeon, where, in the throbbing silence and darkness, he might suffer the agonies of the fabled damned. This was done in the name of love—in the name of mercy—in the name of compassionate Christ.

## THE RACK

This was a box, like the bed of a wagon, within a windlass at each end, with levers and ratchets to prevent slipping; over each windlass went chains; some were fastened to the ankles of the sufferer; others to his wrists. And then priests, clergymen, divines,



saints, began turning these windlasses, and kept turning until the ankles, the knees, the hips, the shoulders, the elbows, the wrists of the victim were all dislocated and the sufferer was wet with the sweat of agony. And they had standing by a physician to feel his pulse. What for? To save his life? Yes. In mercy? No; simply that they might rack him once again.

All these instruments of torture, these means of grace, as seen by Colonel Ingersoll, had been on exhibition in New York city. They were arranged for inspection in a hall at Sixth avenue and Twenty third street. The exhibit did not consist of duplicates or facsimiles of the instruments of torture, but of the original instruments themselves, which

in the past did the deadly and infamous work of breaking the bones and tearing the flesh of human beings. They were mostly from the royal castle of Nuremberg, in Bavaria, but included Spanish and Italian specimens.

### THUMB SCREWS

Thumb screws were not intended solely for compressing thumbs and they did not take their name from the members compressed. They may be used on the wrists, legs, or head, or to prize the offender's teeth apart so that the "blasphemous" tongue may be torn out with pincers furnished with still other thumbscrews. These instruments are of various sizes, but, being always worked by a thumbscrew, like that which spreads and closes a pair of dividers for describing circles, or like those which fasten a clothes wringer on a washtub and depress the upper roller, they are all called thumb screws.

### IRON BED

The picture of a man secured to his bed was comparatively modern, and showed the kind of torture employed only one hundred and twenty-five years ago. It represented a Frenchman named Damiens chained to his iron bed, on which he was carried to the judgment chamber and on which he could be tortured without being released. Damiens interfered in a quarrel between the pope and the king of France. Before being put to death, his flesh was torn and molten lead, wax and boiling oil poured into his wounds.

### PIOUS INSCRIPTIONS ON IMPLEMENTS

Some of the torture implements are of polished steel, damascened with pious

inscriptions. The shackles especially are punctured with holes in the form of a cross. Among the irons used for branding the letter "U" predominated, which in most languages means unbeliever. The little coal stove in which the branding iron was heated, together with the bellows used for blowing up the fire in it, were exhibited. Executioners' swords were numerous and ornamental. The condemned one sat in a chair, with bowed head; the executioner whirled his blade in the air and if sufficiently strong and expert severed the neck at a blow. The swords are piously inscribed with the names of deity and Christ, or with rhymes that may be freely translated about like these:

O God, this sinner to thy kingdom take  
That he may taste of joy, for Jesus' sake.

Or  
Christ is the judge, and I the instrument,  
To execute God's law from heaven sent.

Or, again  
When I upraise the fatal knife,  
God give the sinner eternal life.

### HERETIC CATCHER

They had a heretic and witch catcher—a hoop on the end of a pole. The ends of the hoop at the aperture were so arranged that they opened when the thing was pushed upon the neck; then they sprung together again. Some of them were provided with spike in the ferrule, with which the constable could prod the culprit's shoulders as he pushed him along. The superstition of the days when this instrument was in use is revealed in the belief that there was

some spell about witches and heretics making it dangerous to lay hands upon them.

### BURNING ON THE WHEEL

The process of burning on the wheel, of which the illustration here used is from an old and rare engraving, shows us that



sometimes the executioner varied the monotony of crushing a man's bones by roasting his flesh.

### CHASTITY BELT

There are in the collection a large assortment of collars for scolds, and masks and branks for witches, but a device

that seems about as abominable as anything to be imagined is the so-called "chastity belt". Some of these belts are wound with cloth, and show by stains on them that they have been actually worn. But one is of rough and rusty hoop-iron, and there are teeth on it like those of a saw, pointing inward. Christian woman should turn with a tender yearning toward the time when the church ruled the world and prescribed punishments and long for those happy days to come once more.

### SPIDER

If not enough has been said, let the woman remember the horrible piece of ingenuity, the spider. It is a cluster of steel hooks pointed like needles. It is designed to be spread over the breast of the woman, the hand of the torturer grasps the central ring, drawing points together, and then the flesh is torn away. And the Father of Mercies permitted this thing to be done in his name and under his all-seeing eye.

(Courtesy "Thumbscrew and Rack"  
By Geo E. MACDONALD.)

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### BIBLE IS SECOND-RATE!

As a literary monument the Bible is of much later origin than the Vedas; as a work of literary value it is surpassed by everything written in the last two thousand years by authors even of the second rank, and to compare it seriously with the productions of Homer, Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare or Goethe, would require a fanaticized mind that had entirely lost its power of judgement; its conception of the universe is childish, and its morality revolting, as revealed in the malicious vengeance attributed to God in the Old Testament and in the New, the parable of the labourers of the eleventh hour and the episodes of Mary Magdalen and the woman taken in adultery.

—Max Nordeau, French Writer.



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# News and Notes

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## RATIONALIST CONVENTION

A Rationalist Convention was conducted at Vattoli, Kozhikode district, on 4-5-1977. In the morning session Mr. MBK, Vice-president of Kerala Rationalist Association addressed the gathering on "Rationalist thought". In the evening session, Mr. U. Kalanathan, General Secretary of K.R.A. talked on "Traditional beliefs and Psychology". Mr. Kavil P. K. Achuthan, K. K. Ramdass and T. K. Ibrahim Moulavi participated in the discussion.

Mr. P. Baskaran welcomed the gathering. The programme was conducted by Kunnummal Panchayat Rationalist Association.

## SYMPOSIUM ON ASTROLOGY

Kozhikode Rationalist Association has conducted a symposium on "Astrology and Astronomy" on 12-5-1977 at Town Hall. A Rationalist writer Mr. P. C. Kadalundi presented a paper on the subject. An astrologer, Mr. Kallada Bhaskara Panicker addressed the meeting attempting to justify astrology on scriptural grounds". Mr. M. K.S.Nambiar quoted incidents to disprove astrology as a science. Mr. K. Balakrishna Kurup described astrology as a work of art or poetry. U. Kalanathan expressed the unscientific basic postulates of astrology. Prof. M. K. Prasad presided over the symposium.

## A RATIONALISTIC WEDDING

The wedding of Miss. Soma Sublok, M.A., Member of Indian Rationalist Association, took place on May 29, 1977 at Banga with Prof. Surendra Ajnat, General Secretary,

I.R.A. (Punjab). There was no religious ceremony; no traditional humbug, no superfluous show, no orgy, no dowry, no barat (marriage party), no ornamentation and no



decoration. The couple were in ordinary clothes. There were no invitation cards. A simple cup of tea was served to all. A ten paged paper was distributed among the people wherein the history of marriage institution was traced and marriage based on mutual understanding was advocated. It was an inter-caste wedding as well.

A pledge form was signed by the couple in the presence of friends, rationalists, and local leading personalities.

Father of the bride, Mr. Ram Saran was very much praised for his radical outlook. (SHOULD WE ADD THAT WE LOOK FORWARD TO WITNESSING MORE UNIONS OF THIS TYPE? MAY THE PARTNERSHIP BE LONG, HAPPY AND FRUITFUL!—Ed.)

## ELURU RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION— W. G. DISTRICT

The General Body Meeting of Eluru Town Rationalist Association was held under the Presidentship of Sri D. Manikyala Rao on 17-4-77.

Messrs M. Seetha Rama Swamy (Editor, 'Rytumitra', V. B. Acaari, B. V. Narasimha Rao, prominent Lawyer, Sri P.H.U.S. Somayajulu, Ch. Venkata Rao and Sastry spoke on the occasion.

The following were elected as office bearers.

Honorary President, Mr. V. B. Acharya,  
President, Mr. M. Venka Ramana Reddy  
Vice-Presidents Mr. Muneswara Rao  
and Mr. T. Suryanarayana.

Secretaries, Mr. Appa Rao and Mr. S. R. Suri

Treasurer, Mr. P. Bhaskara Rao

In addition 15 working committee members were also elected.

The Association is being affiliated to I. R. A.

### PADA YATHRA—By Rationalists

Cannanore District Rationalist Association in Kerala has already conducted a Padayathra propagating certain rationalist demands and slogans. Some of the demands were :

1. Urgent implementation of a Uniform Civil Code.
2. Prayer and religious instructions should be prevented in schools.
3. Illiteracy should be eradicated.

4. Secularism should be practised in its true sense.
5. Reorganise the present legal system based on fundamental human rights.
6. Eradicate corruption from personal and social life.
7. Confiscate idle gold worth Rs. 1000 crore of the temples, distribute land property of temples, mosques and churches to landless.
8. Ministers should not participate in religious ceremonies.
9. Remove superstitious material from school text books.
10. Provide inducement to mixed-marriages, increase allowance given to mixed married couples.

The padayathra covered 92 miles during 6 days. At several places the jatha volunteers were welcomed by rationalist unit workers. Public meetings were conducted at Neeleswar, Payyannore, Baliapatam, Cannanore, Mahi, Tuikkariapur, Pariyaram, Mangad, Thottata, Edakkad, Muzhuppilangad and Tellicherry.

Rationalist pamphlets were distributed by the volunteers at different places. Four pamphlets (lowly priced) were specially published by Cannanore District Committee for this purpose.

There were ten volunteers in the jatha. Each of them was provided with a blue gandhi-cap and a cloth bag of uniform colour. The Jatha and public meetings attracted thousands of people on its way. The programme was a grand success.

On 14-5-1977, the jatha was concluded with a public meeting at Tellicherry.

## AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AN APPEAL

We are grateful to the following for their generous donations received during the months of April and May, 1977—

	Rs.
Mr. C. Chandra Sekar, Kapileswarapuram	6 00
Mr. T. Venkateswarulu, Vijayawada	7 00
Mr. K. R. Vasudevan, Bombay	13 00
Mr. G. K. Nettar, Mangalore	13 00
Mr. Sivanagaiah, Bhimavaram	25 00
	64 00

Readers would have noticed that the FREETHOUGHT has been considerably enlarged with no increase in the subscription rate or in the Membership fee. Those who want FREETHOUGHT to maintain its size and improve further are requested to voluntarily rush their generous donations.

### NEW MEMBERS

Membership No.	Name	Place
<b>Life Members :</b>		
LM—33	Mr. Ajoy Kumar	Madras (Tamilnadu)
—34	Mr. S. V. Kirloskar	Belgaum (Karnataka)
—35	*Mr. P. Bhimana, M.A., M.Ed.	Neelore (A.P.)
<b>Ordinary Members :</b>		
M—383	Mr. P. Narayanan Iyer, B.A.	Madras (Tamilnadu)
—384	Mr. P. Vanappa	Kallur (A.P.)
—385	Mr. Peter Sam, B.A., B.L.	Madras (Tamilnadu)
—386	Mr. M. Muralidharan,	Trichur (Kerala)
—387	Mr. K. N. Ramadass, B.A., LL.B.	Hyderabad (A.P.)
—388	Mr. J. Rama Row, B.A.	Chelluru (A.P.)
—389	Mr. J. Satyanarayana	Vijayawada (A.P.)
—390	Mr. Satyavardhana Rao	Eluru (A.P.)
—391	Mr. A. Sambi Reddy	Munnangi, (A.P.)
—392	Mr. Araga Sambi Reddy, B.Com.	Munnangi (A.P.)
—393	Mr. T. P. Kunhiraman	Ayancheri (Kerala)
—394	Mr. G. Sivananda Babu, B.Sc.	Challapalli, (A.P.)
—395	Mr. A. Anjaneyulu Reddy B.Sc., B.Ed.	Theertham (A.P.)
<b>Student Members :</b>		
SM—26	T. N. Bhadran	Vehipadam (Kerala)
—27	G. Venugopal Rao B.Sc.	Hyderabad (A.P.)
—28	Thakore P Mistry	Baroda (Gujarat)

\*Converted from ordinary membership.

GENERAL SECRETARY, IRA.

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